



Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

December 2025 Newsletter

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." [Saint John 10:27]

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. **John 10:27-28**

Dear Sheep of the Divine Shepherd:

Saint Lucia: A Martyr Who Bore the Light of Christ

Each year on December 13, Christians around the world remember Saint Lucia (also known as Lucy), a young woman martyred during the Diocletian persecution in A.D. 304. Her name—derived from *lux*, meaning "light"—has made her a beloved figure in Advent traditions, particularly among Scandinavian Lutherans. But beyond candles and songs, Lucia's story offers a profound confession of faith that speaks clearly to us as Lutheran Christians today.

Lucia's Story: Faith in the Midst of Darkness

Lucia was born in Syracuse, Sicily, to a wealthy family. According to early Christian accounts, she was a Christian from a young age and dedicated her possessions to caring for the poor. Her refusal to renounce Christ and submit to Roman expectations brought severe consequences. Lucia was arrested, tortured, and eventually killed for her unwavering confession that Jesus Christ alone is Lord.

While many legendary details were added in later centuries, the core historical truth remains: Lucia died as a Christian martyr, steadfast in faith and fidelity to Christ in the face of violent opposition.

How Lutherans View the Martyrs

The Lutheran Confessions commend the remembrance of the saints—not as intercessors or secondary saviors, but as examples of God's grace and faithfulness. The *Augsburg Confession* (AC XXI) teaches that we honor the saints by:

1. *Thanking God for giving examples of faith.*
2. *Strengthening our own faith as we see how God sustains His people.*
3. *Imitating their faith and good works within our daily vocations.*

Lucia's steadfastness reflects not her own inner strength but the work of the Holy Spirit, who kept her faithful unto death, just as Christ promised:

"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10)

In remembering Lucia, we learn again what the martyrs always confess: that Christ alone is our light and salvation, and that nothing—not even death—can separate us from His love.

Lucia and the Light of Christ

Lucia is often depicted wearing a wreath of candles, symbolizing the light of Christ shining in the darkness. This imagery fits beautifully within the Advent season, when the Church prays and waits for the coming of the true Light who shines in the darkness (John 1:5).

But Lucia herself is not the light. She is a witness to the Light. Her courage points us not to human bravery but to Christ's victory, which transforms fear into hope and death into life.

In a world increasingly hostile to Christian conviction, Lucia's witness reminds us:

- *Christ's light cannot be extinguished.*
- *The Gospel produces courage not from ourselves but from Him.*
- *Suffering for Christ is never pointless; it is fellowship with Him who suffered for us.*
- *The Christian life is one of daily dying to self and living by faith in Christ alone.*

A Lutheran Approach to Lucia Traditions

In many Lutheran homes—especially in Sweden, Norway, and Finland—December 13 is marked by processions, songs, and children wearing white robes and carrying candles. These traditions are not acts of worship toward a saint, but expressions of Christian joy rooted in the Gospel.

When practiced in a Lutheran manner, Lucia Day celebrates:

- *The victory of Christ's light over sin and death.*
- *The calling of every Christian to shine with His light in word and deed.*
- *A remembrance of the saints that directs us to Christ's saving grace.*
- *The hope of Advent—that the Light who came in humility will come again in glory.*

What Lucia Teaches the Church Today

Lucia's life presses several important reminders upon the Church:

1. Confession Matters

Lucia refused to deny Christ publicly. Her witness calls us to confess the faith clearly, compassionately, and confidently in our vocations.

2. Generosity Flows from the Gospel

Her care for the poor flowed from her understanding that Christ had given everything for her. Our own giving is a fruit of justification, not a work to earn God's favor.

3. Our Hope Is in the Resurrection

Lucia faced death without fear because her hope was anchored in Christ's resurrection. This is the same hope given to us in Baptism.

4. Light Shines in Darkness

The darkness of persecution could not extinguish Christ's light in her life. So too, today's cultural darkness cannot overcome the light of Christ in His people.

A Martyr Who Points Us to Christ

As we approach Christmas, Lucia stands among those faithful witnesses who testify that Christ is the Light of the world. Her life and martyrdom remind us that the Christian faith is not ultimately about cultural tradition, but about the crucified and risen Lord who strengthens His people to live—and die—in hope.

May Lucia's confession encourage us this Advent to stand firm in Christ, walk as children of the light, and look with joy toward the coming of our Savior.

Listen to Jesus,

Pastor

Christian Stewardship



"We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves"
(1 Thess. 5:12-13).

Have you finished your Christmas shopping yet? Do you have a person or two on your list that you just don't know what to give them? While I know you are running short of ideas...dad doesn't really want another tie, and your kid's teacher doesn't need another coffee mug. It can be nothing short of maddening to try to figure things out in the middle of this busy season!

As stewards of all of life and life's resources, we know that life is more than giving gifts. We stewards never want to take anything the Lord provides for granted. During this season of Advent and Christmas, it is a great idea to do whatever you can to be a faithful steward of your pastor. Even more so than the rest of the year, the demands on their time, their presence and their stewardship of the Gospel in the congregation become heightened.

The demands on pastors can wear them down and wear them out. How does the steward in the congregation serve as a faithful steward of the treasure that is their pastor? Here are a few ideas:

- Put them at the top of your prayer list. – Pray that the Lord guards them against the weariness that makes them susceptible to the work of the devil.
- Make worship a priority – St. Paul admonishes the Thessalonians and us to respect those who labor among us. There is no greater way to steward your pastor than to respect him enough to show up and receive what he has been sent to offer in the proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the Holy Sacraments.
- Be receptive to his work – If your pastor is tasked with calling you to repentance or encouraging you to be in worship, know that he is only caring for your soul.
- Esteem him highly – Take the time to thank him for his faithful service to Christ, the congregation and your family.
- Be at peace – This is an easy time for even minor annoyances to get blown out of proportion and become full-blown conflict. This not only spoils the season of Advent and Christmas, but it also spoils our stewardship of the Gospel and those who serve us in that Gospel. Remember that Jesus came into the world to be the Prince of Peace. This is an act of grace and mercy. The steward seeks to reflect this toward their pastor and their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Stewardship at Christmas can be a challenge. Stewardship of your pastor during this time of the year is critical to our shared stewardship of the Gospel at a time of year when many are more open to hear and receive it.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship

Children are God's precious jewels - help them shine for Christ



Week of December 1-6

Wed, Dec 3, 5:30 p.m. Soup/sandwiches
 Wed, Dec 3, 6:30 p.m. Advent Mid-week Service
 Wed, Dec 3, 7:15 p.m. Choir Practice

Week of December 7-13

Sun, Dec 7, 8:30 a.m. Divine Service
 Sun, Dec 7, 9:40 a.m. Fellowship
 Sun, Dec 7, 10:00 a.m. Bible Study
 Wed, Dec 10, 5:30 p.m. Soup/Sandwiches
 Wed, Dec 10, 6:30 p.m. Advent Mid-week Service
 Wed, Dec 10, 7:15 p.m. Choir Practice

Week of December 14-20

Sun, Dec 14, 8:30 a.m. Divine Service
 Sun, Dec 14, 9:40 a.m. Fellowship
 Sun, Dec 14, 9:45 a.m. Congregational Meeting
 Wed, Dec 17, 5:30 p.m. Soup/Sandwiches
 Wed, Dec 17, 6:30 p.m. Advent Mid-week Service
 Wed, Dec 17, 7:15 p.m. Choir Practice

Week of December 21-27

Sun, Dec 21, 8:30 a.m. Divine Service
 Sun, Dec 21, 9:40 a.m. Fellowship
 Sun, Dec 21, 10:00 a.m. Bible Study
 Wed, Dec 24, 6:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Service
 Thu, Dec 25, 8:30 a.m. Festive Divine Service

Week of December 28-31

Sun, Dec 28, 8:30 a.m. Divine Service
 Sun, Dec 29, 9:40 a.m. Fellowship

Choir Practice



Choir practice is on **Wednesdays**, at **7:15 p.m.** Anyone high school or older is encouraged to join. All are welcome to lend their voices in praise to our Savior, Jesus Christ. Many voices make for beautiful music.

Advent



Join us this Advent season for our midweek Evening Prayer services as we ponder anew the events that led up to the birth of the Messiah. **December 3, 10, 17 at 6:30 p.m.** Soup/sandwiches will be served at 5:30 p.m., prior to the service. Please sign up on the sheet in Luther Hall if you are attending.

Christmas Schedule

Join us in celebrating the birth of our Savior this Christmas Eve and Day. Below is the schedule of worship services:



Candlelight Lessons & Carols
 Christmas Eve @ 6:30 p.m.

Festive Divine Service
 Christmas Day @ 8:30 a.m.

Invite your relatives, neighbors, and/or coworkers to join you as we hear anew the story of God becoming man to save us from our sins. The vast array of Christmas hymns and carols will be spread out over these two services, the following Sunday, and Epiphany. O come, let us adore Him!

December Birthdays

03 Al Gernenz
 10 Victoria Fox
 16 Rev. David Zimmer
 20 Ashleigh Bingenheimer
 27 Jonathan Gernenz
 28 Marjorie Jahnsen
 30 Aaron Castro



December Baptismal Anniversaries

15 Bobbie Koritzke
 25 Cris Ruisz
 29 Al Gernenz



NEW MEMBERS

Mark & Anne Drevlow
 16047 Borio Drive, Crest Hill 60403
 708-253-3508
Markdrevlow@aol.com

Congregational Meeting

Congregational Meeting on Dec. 14, after Divine Service/fellowship.

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

2026 Budget

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Ed Cruz. Chairman Chairman@ds-lcms.org

Ladies Aid



Our two current projects address these needs by giving gift cards, presents and food supplies. THE GIVING TREE is currently in the narthex of the church with envelopes requesting cards for different types of families. If you are able, please take an envelope and provide the assistance requested. Return the envelope/gifts to Lisa or Ed Cruz by **December 7**.

THE FOOD DRIVE--Our gifts of food do two things for those in need. Of course, it provides food, especially for a holiday dinner. In addition to the food that you have so generously been leaving in Luther Hall, we have received \$500 from Thrivent to purchase the perishables that we all need. Each family will receive meat, potatoes, vegetables, dessert, and even some "goodies" through the Thrivent grants.



Mid-size sturdy boxes are needed to pack the food and can be dropped off anytime in the nursery. (Thanks).

All food and Giving Tree donations need to be at church by **December 7** to give us enough time to purchase food, sort it by family, and have it available for pickup by Wednesday December 17. Those recipients of the Giving Tree need time to use their gift cards to purchase gifts/etc.

Thank you for your generous donations!

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa.

All women are encouraged to attend the Ladies Aid meeting on Saturday, January 17 at 10:00 a.m.

Prayer Chain



Several members are part of a church prayer chain. If you (men or women) would like to join them in praying for our congregation's special needs, please contact Julie Zimmer at 712-584-5301 or jdzimmer@aol.com

2026 Offering Envelopes Yearly Tax Letter

If you **don't** need new offering envelopes, please see Ron ASAP. In mid-January look for your end-of-year tax letters. If you have any questions, please see Ron Ruisz, Financial Secretary.

Altar Flowers

Thank you to everyone who donated flowers for the altar in 2025 and to Ruth Ogden for arranging the beautiful bouquets.

In lieu of purchasing poinsettias, a memorial donation may be given to the Altar Guild Fund. Forms/money should be returned by **December 7**.

The 2026 flower charts are posted.. This is a wonderful way to help beautify God's house, celebrate a birthday or anniversary, or remember a departed loved one. Traditionally flowers are not used during the penitential seasons of Lent and Advent. We typically have special floral arrangements for certain festivals: palms on Palm Sunday, spring flowers on Easter Sunday, red bouquets on Confirmation, and poinsettias on Christmas. If you would like to contribute flowers, please add your name to any open Sunday on the flower charts. Ruth will do two bouquets for \$30.00. If you sign up, Karen will contact you to get your flower request, and a brief note to place in the worship bulletin.



Sunday Treats



Do you enjoy treats and fellowship after Sunday services? If so, please consider signing up on any given Sunday(s). To enable our diabetic members to enjoy these treats, consider supplementing some of the "sugary goodies" with crackers/cheese /fruit. The signup sheet is posted on the Luther Hall bulletin board.

Important Phone Numbers

Church office: 630-759-5300
Pastor Zimmer: 630-759-5300
Prayer Chain: 712-584-5301 (Julie Zimmer)
Head Elder: 630-360-5573 (Scott Collins)
Newsletter info: 630-759-3188 (Karen Moritz)
(Due December 26)

Raise Right

Shop with Raise Right (new name) cards are available throughout the year for everyday expenses and gifts for any special occasion. Next order dates are, **December 7 & 14**. Pre-purchased cards are available after Sunday services and forms are on the bookcase in Luther Hall. These cards make many of the Ladies Aid projects possible, and best of all they do not cost members anything beyond the face-value amount. RaiseRight pays us to use their service. What is more, many of these cards can be reloaded so you do not have to continually buy new cards.

Your Organization:

Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church – Manna

Your Coordinator: **Lisa Cruz**

630-636-6359 • dslcmanna@yahoo.com

shopwithscrip.com

Your Enrollment Code:

B2LD2C7A55973

Follow Us on Social Media

Follow us on social media to keep up to date with church happenings and events, find a variety of new and old congregational photos, and read inspirational posts and quotes from Holy Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and various Christians throughout the centuries. Facebook: fb.me/ Twitter: @dslc60440



You are invited to listen to Issues, Etc. — the radio voice of the Lutheran faith for the 21st century. Issues, Etc. is Lutheran talk radio hosted by LCMS Pastor Todd Wilken and produced by Lutheran Public Radio. Listen live (3:00-5:00pm CST) or at your leisure via the following options (go to issuesetc.org and click on the 'listen' tab for specific options.

Thrivent Financial

Directing Choice Dollars is a great way for eligible Thrivent members to show support for what matters most to them. Thank you to everyone who donated their choice dollars. Remember to donate your 2025 choice dollars to Divine Shepherd.

The Heart of Christmas

Let's try to recapture the very reason we celebrate this wondrous season. Let's think back to yesterdays of kindness respect and simpler ways.

Remember when it was never thought odd to pledge to one nation 'under God', when prayer being said did not cause a stir and "Christmas" was an acceptable word?...

Think back to the time we could gather round a nativity scene in the center of town, in awe of the simple figures there, the shepherds, a mother, and a child so fair.

A miracle sent down to earth, a simple manger and a baby's birth, a savior unto us was given to show us all the path to heaven.

It's a season of love, full to the brim but it wouldn't exist if it weren't for HIM! So, let's spread this message in all we do: "Merry Christmas and God Bless You!

May your hearts be filled with the reason for the season.

If you look for Me

If you look for Me at Christmas, you won't need a special star-I'm no longer in Bethlehem, I'm right there where you are.

You may not be aware of Me amid the celebrations-you'll have to look beyond the stores and all the decorations.

But, if you take a moment from your list of things to do and listen to your heart, you'll find I'm waiting there for you.

You're the one I want to be with, you're the reason that I came, And you'll find Me in the stillness as I'm whispering your name.

Love Jesus

A Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year

You are cordially invited to
A BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION!!!

Guest of Honor: Jesus Christ

Date: Every day. Traditionally, December 25
but He's always around, so the date is flexible...

Time: Whenever you're ready.
(Please don't be late, though, or you'll miss out on all the fun!)

Place: In your heart.... He'll meet you there.
(You'll hear Him knock.)

Attire: Come as you are... grubbies are okay.
He'll be washing our clothes anyway. He said something about
new white robes and crowns for everyone who stays till the last.

Tickets: Admission is free. He's already paid for everyone...
(He says you wouldn't have been able to afford it anyway...
it cost Him everything He had. But you do need to accept the ticket!!)

Refreshments: New wine, bread, and a far-out drink He calls "Living Water,"
followed by a supper that promises to be out of this world!

Gift Suggestions: Your life. He's one of those people who already has everything else.
(He's very generous in return though. Just wait until you see what He has for you!)

Entertainment: Joy, Peace, Truth, Light, Life, Love, Real Happiness,
Communion with God, Forgiveness, Miracles, Healing, Power, Eternity in Paradise, Contentment, and much more!
(All "G" rated, so bring your family and friends.)

R.S.V.P. Very Important!
He must know ahead so He can reserve a spot for you at the table.
Also, He's keeping a list of His friends for future reference. He calls it the
"Lamb's Book of Life."

Party being given by His Kids (that's us!!)

